

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 20943 01 OF 02 221332Z  
ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-03 NSCE-00 TRSE-00 SP-02 SIL-01 L-01 EB-04  
H-01 /040 W  
-----125104 221423Z /45

R 221229Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9419  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION USNATO  
USDOCOSOUTH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 20943

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, IT  
SUBJECT:CONVERSATION WITH SOCIALIST PARTY LEADER CRAXI

SUMMARY: PSI SECRETARY BETTINO CRAXI TOLD ME DURING BRIEF  
VISIT AT OUR RESIDENCE THAT HE IS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE  
"TO PUT THE BARKES ON UNFOLDING POLITICAL CRISIS. HE  
EXPECTS MOMENT OF TRUTH TO COME IN MID-JANUARY, WHEN THE  
PCI WILL EITHER AGREE TO ENTER INTO MAJORITY ALONG WITH  
INCLUSION OF ONE OR TWO "TECHNICIANS" IN GOVERNMENT, OR,  
IF THIS ARRANGEMENT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO PCI, NATIONAL  
ELECTIONS, PROBABLY IN JUNE, WILL BECOME INEVITABLE. CRAXI  
SEES HARDINING OF PCI'S POSITION AS PROBABLE RESULT OF  
SOVIET PRESSURE AS WELL AS PRESSURE FROM PCI BASE AND THE  
TRADE UNIONS. HE SEES MAJOR PCI AND SOVIET EFFORT  
TO OUST HIM IN ORDER TO MAKE PSI "INSTRUMENT OF  
PCI'S WILL" BUT FEELS CONFIDENT HE CAN HOLD  
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PAGE 02 ROME 20943 01 OF 02 221332Z

LEADERSHIP AT CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING JANUARY  
13-14 AND BEYOND. I REITERATED OUR POLICY OF OPPOSITION  
TO PCI PARTICIPATION IN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. IN COURSE OF BRIEF VISIT TO OUR RESIDENCE THIS  
MORNING AT MY INVITATION, BETTINO CRAXI GAVE ME SUMMARY  
OF HIS VIEWS ON UNFOLDING POLITICAL SITUATION. AFTER

I NOTED APPROVINGLY HIS EFFORTS AT MODERATION, HE CONFIRMED THAT HE IS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO "PUT THE BRAKES" ON THE UNFOLDING CRISIS--SPECIFICALLY BY WORKING AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE URGING IMMEDIATE INCLUSION OF PCI IN "GOVERNMENT OF EMERGENCY." IN CRAXI'S VIEW, CURRENT CRISIS WAS TRIGGERED BY LA MALFA AND ALSO BY UNEXPECTED HARDENING OF PCI POSITION, WHICH HE SEES RESULTING NOT ONLY FROM DISSATISFACTION OF ITS BASE AND TRADE UNIONS BUT ALSO FROM SOVIET PRESSURE. THE SOVIET UNION, HE BELIEVES, HAS OPENED "CLEAR OFFENSIVE AGAINST EUROCOMMUNISM"; IN FRANCE THIS TOOK FORM OF BREAKING UP ALLIANCE OF LEFT; IN ITALY IT HAS TAKEN FORM OF PRESSURE ON PCI THROUGH PRO-SOVIET FIGURES LIKE COSSUTTA AND PAJETTA TO TOUGHEN PARTY'S POSITION AND INCREASE ITS INFLUENCE IN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT.

2. CRAXI DEPICTED PCI AS MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT TO OVERTHROW HIM AS PSI LEADER AND MAKE HIS PARTY "INSTRUMENT OF PCI'S WILL." HE FEELS, WITHOUT CITING ANY HARD EVIDENCE, THAT KGB IS ALSO WORKING FOR HIS OVERTHROW AND IS ACTIVELY FINANCING EFFORTS OF MANCA AND OTHER OPPONENTS. HE CITED ITALIAN AMBASSADOR IN PEKING AS REPORTING THAT CHINESE BELIEVE KGB HAS STEPPED UP ITS ROLE IN ITALY. IN THIS CONNECTION, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ROME 20943 01 OF 02 221332Z

CRAXI SAID MEMBERS OF RED BRIGADES HAVE BEEN FOUND WITH CZECH PASSPORTS AND THAT WEAPON USED TO KILL DEPUTY EDITOR OF LA STAMPA CARLO CASALEGNO WAS CZECH-MADE. CRAXI OPINED THAT QADHAFI MAY ALSO BE FINANCING HIS PSI OPPONENTS. HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT NOTWITHSTANDING EFFORT AGAINST HIM, HE WILL RETAIN LEADERSHIP AT JANUARY 13-14 CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING AND BEYOND.

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PAGE 01 ROME 20943 02 OF 02 221349Z  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 20943

LIMDIS

3. MOMENT OF TRUTH IN CRAXI'S OPINION WILL COME  
IN MID-JANUARY. CGIL PRESIDENT LUCIANO LAMA SEEMS  
DETERMINED TO HAVE GENERAL STRIKE AT THIS TIME, BUT  
CRAXI SAYS IT MIGHT STILL BE AVOIDED. OTHER  
EFFORTS WILL BE MADE AFTER HOLIDAYS TO BRING DOWN  
GOVERNMENT. ZACCANINI HAS ASSURED CRAXI THAT  
HE WILL NOT BRING PCI INTO "GOVERNMENT OF EMERGENCY"  
IN ABSENCE OF NEW ELECTIONS, AND CRAXI BELIEVES  
THIS IS POSITION OF DC LEADERSHIP GENERALLY.  
(INTERESTINGLY, HE CITED FANFANI AS ONLY DC LEADER  
WHO SEEMED "AMBIGUOUS" ON THIS ISSUE.) IN THIS  
SITUATION HE HOPES PCI WILL FINALLY ACCEPT COMPROMISE  
OF ENTERINT PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY WITH POSSIBLY  
ONE OR TWO "TECHNICIANS" IN GOVERNMENT. IF NOT,  
THERE WILL BE NEW ELECTIONS, PROBABLY IN JUNE.

4. CRAXI TOOK POSITION THAT COMPROMISE ALONG ABOVE  
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PAGE 02 ROME 20943 02 OF 02 221349Z

LINES WAS NOT PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS, SINCE HAVING  
PCI IN PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY WAS "A MERE FORMALITY"  
INVOLVING NO REAL CHANGE FROM PRESENT SITUATION,  
AND BRINGING IN TECHNICIANS WAS ALSO "HARMLESS."  
WHEN I ASKED WHETHER THIS WOULD APPLY TO TECHNICIANS  
SUCH A PROFESSOR LUIGI SPAVENTA, INDEPENDENT  
SENATOR WHO RAN ON PCI TICKET, CRAXI ANSWERED  
THIS WOULD BE NO PROBLEM FOR HIM. "SPAVENTA IS  
CERTAINLY NO COMMUNIST--JUST AN OPPORTUNIST." WHEN  
I REMONSTRATED THAT OPPORTUNISTS COULD BE DANGEROUS,  
HE RESPONDED: "YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION WE FACED  
IN JUNE OF 1976. THE BOURGEOISIE WERE FRIGHTEND. MANY  
OF THEM VOTED FOR THE PCI AND OTHERWISE LENT SUPPORT, INCLUDING

MANY BUSINESSMEN. SPAVENTA MERELY WENT ALONG."

5. IN COURSE OF OUR MEETING, I REITERATED OUR POLICY OF  
OPPOSITION TO PCI PARTICIPATION IN ITAL GOVERNMENT  
AND OUR DESIRE TO SEE PCI INFLUENCE LIMITED  
AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. I ALSO STRESSED OUR DESIRE  
TO SEE GOVERNMENT TAKE STEPS NECESSARY TO DEAL WITH  
ECONOMIC CRISIS. CRAXI SAID US POLICY WAS CLEAR  
AND UNEXCEPTIONABLE. WE AGREED TO MEET AGAIN IN JANUARY.  
GARDNER

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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**Disposition History:** n/a  
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